



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Fire-Rescue Department

Sprinkler Policies

Policy FS – 0411

Sprinkler Protection for Balconies, etc. for Group R, Division 1 Occupancies

1. This policy is intended to clarify the requirements for sprinkler protection of balconies, patios, decks, etc. for Group R occupancies.
2. This policy shall be limited to Group R occupancies with NFPA 13 and 13R automatic sprinkler systems.
3. For the purposes of this policy the following definitions will apply:
 - A. Balcony: A platform that projects from the wall of a building and is enclosed by a parapet or railing. This policy considers patios, decks, and porches to be synonymous with balconies. For the purposes of this policy, rooms that are recessed from the wall of the building, even if identified as 'balconies', 'porches', or 'decks' on the drawings will be treated as rooms.
 - B. Canopy: An ornamental roof like structure.
 - C. Open: Having no enclosing or confining barrier: accessible on all or nearly all sides.

NFPA 13 Systems: NFPA 13 does not mention sprinkler protection for balconies, patios, deck, etc. The closest it gets is **Section 5-13.8, 2001 NFPA 13**. That section applies to exterior roofs or canopies. It states, "Sprinklers shall be installed under roofs or canopies over areas where combustibles are stored or handled." It does give an exception if they are of noncombustible or limited combustible construction and no combustibles are stored or handled under them.

Sprinklers are not required under combustible roofs or canopies 4 feet and less in width. They shall be required if these roofs or canopies have combustibles stored or handled under them.

For the purposes of this policy, combustibles shall be considered as stored or handled under all exterior roofs or canopies attached to apartments or condominiums. Combustibles shall not be considered as stored or handled under roofs or canopies attached to hotels or motels.

NFPA 13R Systems: Section 2-6, Exception No. 3, 1999 NFPA 13R states, " Sprinklers shall not be required in any porches, balconies, corridors, and stairs that are open and attached."

For a porch, balcony, corridor, or stair to be considered open it shall not have a wall on two or more sides. A corridor is not considered open if it has a door at either end. A 42" high guardrail or wall shall not preclude a side from being considered open. However, the remainder of the side, for its full height and width shall be open.

Contractors desiring to use the above exception must provide appropriate details on the sprinkler drawings so the plan reviewer can confirm compliance with the above conditions. Appropriate details shall include, but not be limited to, elevations and sections showing all conditions.

NFPA 13D Systems: In Group R, Division 3 occupancies with 13D systems the distinction of what is a balcony, porch, etc. is not as clear. These need to be handled on a case by case basis with the sprinkler plan reviewer. It should not be left to address until the field inspection.